

IN THE CLAIMS

Please amend the claims, without prejudice, as follows:

31. (Currently amended) An adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly for ~~In~~ a body brace ~~appliance of the type~~ having at least a first back element shaped to fit about a person's lower back region, ~~the improvement comprising:~~

~~an iliac crest belt element attachable to an inner surface of the first back element, the belt comprising an elongated strip formed from a substantially rigid material;~~

said elongated strip having a center portion and at least first and second ends;

locking elements for adjusting the fit of and locking said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly about the waist of the person, said locking elements being disposed in corresponding locations on said first and second ends, respectively, of said elongated strip;

said center portion including means for fastening said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly to the first back element;

the said elongated strip being sized and shaped so as to encircle the waist of the person with an adjustable circumference and tension, with the said center portion positioned substantially against the lumbar spinal region of the back of the person and said first and second ends positioned against the front of the person when said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly is locked about the waist of the person,

the said elongated strip including at least a first portion being further sized and shaped to urge against engage the iliac crests of the person when said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly is locked about the waist of the person.

32. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 31 further comprising locking elements for adjusting the fit of the belt about the waist of the person and for locking the belt about the waist of the person iliac crest pads attached to the inner surface of said elongated strip adjacent said center portion thereof.

33. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 31 ~~32~~ wherein the said locking elements include cooperating buckle and buckle-receiving elements disposed in corresponding locations on the said first and second ends, respectively.

34. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 31 ~~32~~ wherein ~~the~~ said locking elements include buckle and hook-and-loop elements disposed in corresponding locations on ~~the~~ said first and second ends, respectively.

35. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 31 ~~32~~ wherein ~~the~~ said locking elements include cooperating hook and loop fastening elements disposed in corresponding locations on ~~the~~ said first and second ends, respectively, ~~so as to interlock.~~

36. (Canceled)

37. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 31 ~~36~~ wherein ~~the~~ said substantially rigid material forming said elongated strip is ~~constructed from a~~ plastic.

38. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 37 wherein ~~the strip is constructed from~~ said plastic is a low density plastic.

39. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 38 wherein ~~the strip is constructed from~~ said low density plastic is polyethylene.

40. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 31 ~~39~~ wherein ~~the~~ said elongated strip further comprises an inner layer of relatively compressible material, ~~and an outer layer of~~ attached to said substantially rigid material.

41. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 31 ~~35~~ ~~further comprising wherein said~~ fastening elements ~~for means is operative to~~ removably fastening ~~the~~ said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly to the first back element.

42. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 41 wherein ~~the~~ said removable fastening elements ~~are~~ means comprises screws.

43. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 31 ~~40~~ ~~further comprising wherein said fastening elements for is operative to non-removably fastening the said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly~~ to the first back element.

44. (Currently amended) The adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly of claim 43 wherein ~~the said non-removable fastening elements are means comprises~~ rivets.

45. (Cancelled)

46. (Cancelled)

47. (Currently Amended) A body brace comprising:

at least a first back shell element having an inner surface shaped to fit about a person's lower back region, said back shell being constructed of a substantially rigid plastic material;

an adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly element attachable to an inner surface of the first back element, the belt comprising an elongated strip having a center portion and at least first and second ends, said elongated strip being formed from a substantially rigid material;

locking elements for adjusting the fit of and locking said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly about the waist of the person, said locking elements being disposed in corresponding locations on said first and second ends, respectively, of said elongated strip;

said center portion including means for fastening said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly to said inner surface of said first back element;

the said elongated strip being sized and shaped so as to encircle the waist of the person with an adjustable circumference and tension, with the said center portion positioned substantially against the lumbar spinal region of the back of the person and said first and second ends positioned against the front of the person when said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly is locked about the waist of the person;

the said elongated strip including at least a first portion sized and shaped to urge against engage the iliac crests of the person when said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly is locked about the waist of the person.

48. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 47 further comprising ~~locking elements for adjusting the fit of the belt about the waist of the person and locking the belt about the waist of the person~~ iliac crest pads attached to the inner surface of said elongated strip adjacent said center portion thereof.

49. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 47 ~~48~~ wherein ~~the~~ said locking elements include cooperating buckle and buckle-receiving elements disposed in corresponding locations on ~~the~~ said first and second ends, respectively.

50. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 47 ~~49~~ wherein ~~the~~ said locking elements include buckle and hook-and-loop elements disposed in corresponding locations on ~~the~~ said first and second ends, respectively.

51. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 47 ~~49~~ wherein ~~the~~ said locking elements include cooperating hook and loop fastening elements disposed in corresponding locations on ~~the~~ said first and second ends, respectively, ~~so as to interlock.~~

52. (Canceled)

53. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 47 ~~52~~ wherein ~~the~~ said elongated strip is ~~constructed from a~~ plastic.

54. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 53 wherein ~~the strip is constructed from~~ said plastic is a low density plastic.

55. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 54 wherein ~~the strip is constructed from~~ said low density plastic is polyethylene.

56. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 55 wherein ~~the~~ said elongated strip further comprises an inner layer of relatively compressible material, ~~and an outer layer of~~ attached to said substantially rigid material.

57. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim ~~47~~ 51 ~~further comprising wherein said fastening elements is operative to for removably fastening the said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly to the said first-back shell~~element.

58. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 57 wherein ~~the said removable fastening elements are~~ means comprises screws.

59. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim of ~~47~~ 51 ~~further comprising wherein said fastening elements for means is operative to non-removably fastening the said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly to the said first-back shell~~element.

60. The brace of claim 59 wherein ~~the said non-removable fastening elements are~~ means comprises rivets.

61. (Canceled)

62. (Currently Amended) The brace of claim 51 wherein ~~the said adjustable interlocking iliac crest belt assembly interlocks with the said first-back shell~~element so as to impart additional stabilizing force to the back element.